

Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy and Procedure

Volunteer Centre Sutton (VCS) is committed to safeguarding adults at risk and promoting their welfare. We believe everyone has a responsibility to protect adults from abuse, harm, and neglect and to work in ways that respect people's rights, dignity, and independence. VCS aims to ensure that all adults who engage with our services, volunteers, staff, and partners are safe and supported.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, sessional workers and anyone working on behalf of VCS (referred to in this policy as *staff*). VCS will work in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Care Act 2014, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and local safeguarding guidance from the Sutton Safeguarding Adults Board.

VCS is also an equal opportunities organisation and will not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, nationality, or any other protected characteristic.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for safeguarding adults are:

Chief Executive: Anita Maullin

Adult Services Manager: Irene Jordan

Email: safeguarding@vcsutton.org.uk

Telephone: 020 8661 5900

A Deputy Safeguarding Lead will act in their absence.

1. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote safe working practices that reduce the risk of abuse or neglect
- ensure concerns are recognised and responded to appropriately
- protect adults with care and support needs from harm
- ensure staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities
- support effective partnership working with relevant agencies

VCS is committed to Making Safeguarding Personal, meaning safeguarding approaches are person-centred and focused on the outcomes that the adult wants.

2. Who This Policy Applies To

Safeguarding duties apply where an adult:

- is aged 18 or over
- has needs for care and support (whether or not these are being met by the local authority)
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect
- is unable to protect themselves because of those needs

3. Safeguarding Principles

VCS will follow the safeguarding principles outlined in the Care Act:

- Empowerment – supporting people to make their own decisions
- Prevention – acting before harm occurs
- Proportionality – responding in the least intrusive way appropriate
- Protection – supporting those most at risk
- Partnership – working with local organisations and communities
- Accountability – being transparent and responsible in safeguarding practice

4. Types of Abuse

Abuse may take many forms and this policy covers all types of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Self-neglect

Other forms of harm may include:

- coercive control
- exploitation (including online exploitation)
- mate crime
- cuckooing
- radicalisation and extremism

VCS recognises its safeguarding responsibilities under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 where relevant.

5. Mental Capacity

When supporting adults at risk, VCS follows the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005:

- every adult has the right to make their own decisions unless proven otherwise
- people should be supported to make decisions wherever possible
- decisions made on behalf of someone without capacity must be in their best interests
- the least restrictive option should always be chosen

Management and key staff have training on the Mental Capacity Act, however VCS does not make the decision on if someone has mental capacity or not. We work with partners who take this responsibility.

6. Safeguarding Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for ensuring safeguarding policies are implemented, advising staff and volunteers on safeguarding concerns, making referrals to the local authority or police when required and ensuring safeguarding training is provided. VCS will maintain a secure safeguarding record system and liaise with safeguarding partners across Sutton. All safeguarding concerns should be reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL as soon as possible and logged within the VCS Safeguarding email.

7. Safer Recruitment

VCS follows safe recruitment practices including if required for a regulated activity, the completion of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Staff and volunteers will also have their ID checked to verify their address, undertake reference checks and possible safeguarding risk assessments for roles involving adults at risk and or specific activities. Staff who fail to follow safeguarding procedures may be subject to disciplinary action.

8. Training

All staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role, including:

- safeguarding adults awareness
- recognising signs of abuse
- reporting safeguarding concerns

Training will be refreshed annually and safeguarding will be discussed through supervision, team and DSL Safeguarding meetings.

9. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Effective safeguarding requires appropriate information sharing. VCS will only share relevant information with safeguarding partners where necessary to protect individuals. VCS will respect confidentiality wherever possible and obtain consent where appropriate unless doing so would increase risk. We will follow the requirements of the UK GDPR. Information sharing should never be prevented by uncertainty where a safeguarding concern exists.

Sharing the right information, at the right time with the right people, is fundamental to good safeguarding practice. As a general principle, people must assume it is their responsibility to raise a safeguarding concern if they believe an adult at risk is suffering or likely to suffer abuse or neglect, rather than assume someone else will do so. They should share the information with Volunteer Centre Sutton and or appropriate partners if they believe or suspect that a crime has been committed or that the individual is immediately at risk.

10. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If someone discloses abuse or neglect:

- listen carefully and remain calm
- do not ask leading questions
- reassure the person they have done the right thing
- explain that the information may need to be shared to keep them safe
- record the information as soon as possible using the person's own words
- report the concern immediately to your line manager or the DSL

If the person is in immediate danger, contact the emergency services on 999.

Safeguarding concerns may also be referred to Adult Social Care through the local authority.

11. Making a referral or reporting a safeguarding concern

When the matter is already severe or serious, early referral gives more time to protect the individual and can prevent situation from escalating. If an adult is in immediate danger notify the authorities straight away E.g. Police/Local authority. London Borough of Sutton: 020 8770 6770 or Out of Hours 020 8770 5000 (after 5 p.m. or weekends and holidays ask for the Emergency Duty Team). There may also be a need to notify other relevant services if the suspected abuse involves their service or if they can support the adult in making choices and having control about how they want to live. Advocacy for All can provide an Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA), or the Community Mental Health Team where the adult at risk has an ongoing mental health need.

12. Information required to make a referral or report a concern. If you do not have all this information to hand, provide as much as you can and follow up with additional information

- Details of alleged victim – name, address, age, DOB, gender, ethnic background including principal language spoken, details of any disability
- Details of GP and any known medication
- Whether the individual is aware of and has consented to the referral/report.
- The mental capacity of the individual (are there are any concerns/doubts about this?)
- If appropriate, advise agency on preferred/advised method or environment when approaching the alleged victim or perpetrator.
- Also, any relevant information, for example:
 - Reasons for concerns and therefore this referral;
 - Details of how these concerns came to light;
 - Specific information relating to these concerns;

- Details of any arrangements which have already been made for the protection of the adult at risk or any immediate action taken;
- Details of anyone else to whom this referral has also been made; 6.6.6 Details of the alleged perpetrator and if they are an adult at risk;
- Details of alleged abuse and information about suspicions;
- Details of any other background information;
- An impression of how serious the situation might be;
- Details of any other professional involved;
- Details of carers and any significant family members, neighbours, friends, etc.

13. If you have a concern about a Volunteer Centre Sutton member of our staff or volunteer, you should contact LBS directly, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 020 8770 4776 lado@sutton.gov.uk (secure email)

Allegations or concerns about an employee or volunteer must immediately

- be notified to the Chief Executive (CEO) Anita Maullin (or the Chair of the Trustees if the concern is about the Chief Executive);

Following consultation, the CEO (or Chair of Trustees) will discuss with appropriate action: Immediate referral to LADO; and/or Internal investigation; and/or Consideration of disciplinary proceedings.

14. Safeguarding Recording and Monitoring

All safeguarding concerns will be recorded securely and reviewed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Records will include details of the concern, actions taken, what and when referrals are made and outcomes. These will be reviewed until closed by the DSL team.

Serious safeguarding incidents will be reported to the Board of Trustees and, where appropriate, to the Charity Commission.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

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